

Appendix P

INFORMATION PROGRAM EVALUATION

METHODS

How our audiences perceive the Army is critical to the success of all operations we are involved in. Internally, the Army's people require certain information to function effectively. The more they know and understand, the better they perform. Information about the operation, the unit's particular mission, how the commander feels about the situation, and a host of other subjects are of interest to both soldiers and civilians. Externally, the general public has specific needs for information about what their Army is doing and how they are doing it. This appendix explains methods for measuring success in the conduct of PA information programs.

Command information is communication between the commanders and those commanded. Command Information is different from the Public Affairs function of Information Provision in that it is the commander's responsibility to inform his people. Commanders must communicate their intentions and the troops, community, indeed the general public, must know his concerns and intentions. It is especially important to note that PA Information Provision techniques and procedures are just one channel that the commander may use in communicating to his audiences.

A poorly recognized fact is that the communication links between the commander and his audiences occur on various levels and assorted channels. This type of communication no longer fits the "top-down" communications model of the cold war Army. The explosion of today's digital technology has provided individual soldiers, civilians, family members, and the general public the ability to bypass rigid, controlled, vertical communication systems in favor of the common user, multidirectional, reciprocal, simultaneous, real-time transactive communications systems. Americans have the power to bypass the gatekeepers and ignore canned, shoddily produced, dated industrial age information products, in favor of accessing on-line information services or the Internet directly. Information is passed in all directions, continually. These audiences will have access to many more sources of information, which makes evaluating the effects of Army PA Information Programs all the more difficult.

This explosion of information technology has also highlighted how critical it is for PA elements to stay up to date on communications technologies, information services, and socio-economic trends of these forces at work.

Despite the rapid change in the information environment, the general steps for evaluating information program effects has remained the same:

- Determine the command's mission and the commander's method for accomplishing that mission.
- Identify all the various audiences interested in information related to the command, its members, and the mission.

- Identify a public opinion baseline -- the template against which new public opinion information will be compared.
- Gather identify all the messages communicated and identify which audiences' received such information.
- Gather information on the information program impacts. This is done reviewing unit newspapers, letters to editors, responses to information programs fact sheets, formations, surveys, and interviews. Check related bulletin boards on all on-line information services. Check related Newsgroups on world-wide-web nodes, which commonly carry related information. Monitor discussion groups on on-line services.
- Attend commander's calls, staff meetings, formations, briefings, and other gatherings where audience reaction, troop morale and like information will be discussed.
- Evaluate the knowledge of the targeted organizations. This is accomplished through in-person question/answer surveys and interviews, E-mail surveys, and electronic town hall meetings, etc.
- Coordinate with other staff elements addressing similar information issues (SJA, Chaplain, PMO, IG, etc.).
- Produce a summary of information gathered in an impact assessment.